

News From Congressman Joe Sestak

eNewsletter – March 2009 Review

Dear Constituents of the 7th District,

Our efforts to face and overcome these economic challenges together continued in March, highlighted by the second 7th Congressional District Business Procurement Summit on March 27 at the Springfield Country Club. More than 1,000 people packed the summit, which brought dedicated government and corporate leaders together with local small businesses, community organizations, and municipalities to ensure that our District has the tools, information, and contacts to secure funding and business opportunities through the government contracting process and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). To provide further access to the Recovery Act, each week my staff has continued to update my comprehensive Resource Directory, which provides specific information and contacts to the agencies that will be administering stimulus funds. The Directory is accessible from my Web site, www.sestak.house.gov

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In Congress, we are continuing to work hard to repair our financial sector, get the economy

moving forward, and lay the foundations for our long term prosperity. The effects of the economic stimulus continue to be felt. If you noticed more take-home pay in your paycheck, that is because the Making Work Pay tax cut—which benefits 95% of American working families—is now in full effect and will result in a savings of \$800 for most American families this year. I also supported President Obama’s housing plan, which will help keep millions of Americans from losing their homes to foreclosure. And just this week I voted in support of the President’s budget, which establishes a strong blueprint for our economic recovery. I did object to certain Congressional procedures in the way the House has handled the budget, including the use of “reconciliation” that would allow the budget (and health care reform) to pass along a party-line vote, because I believe the best achievements are accomplished in a bipartisan way. However, I strongly support the strategic investments that are the core of this budget—investments in education, energy, and health care that will save jobs now while ensuring our future prosperity and well being.

As Vice Chairman of the Small Business Committee, I know that small business is the engine of our national economy, and small business will be the engine of our recovery. Over the last 10 years, small businesses have created 70 percent of the new jobs in America. That’s why I held the Business Procurement Summit and why I supported President Obama’s \$15 billion plan to unlock credit for small businesses. As credit has become less accessible during the ongoing recession, small business owners who acted responsibly have been impacted by the imprudent behavior of others in the financial system. Businesses with a reliable credit history have been denied loans because of conditions that have nothing to do with their own actions and are now finding it difficult or impossible to expand their business, make their payments or keep workers on their payrolls.

I am very proud to announce that Congress has passed the Serve America Act, which contains my Silver Scholarship Program. The Act will encourage the type of service that is the foundation of America, and the Silver Scholarship Program will reward the great volunteer work of our senior citizens. Through the program, those over 55 who commit to volunteering 350 hours in a year will earn a \$1,000 scholarship for continuing education that can also be transferred to their children or grandchildren.

This month, President Obama signed the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009, which included many provisions for the 7th District, funding programs from domestic abuse prevention to support for children with autism. I continue to support elimination of the earmark process in favor of a competitive grant system—and I commend recent efforts toward greater accountability and transparency—but I am pleased that worthwhile and responsible programs in our District will receive the crucial funding they need to contribute to our economy and community. The list of programs is available [here](#) .

Here in Media, my District Office continues to remain open seven days a week. We've completed more than 10,000 constituent cases—where the average cases completed for a district is only 3,200. I have continued to enjoy visits to schools, hospitals and homes, veterans organizations, fire stations, local business, and many community organizations and events. If I can be of assistance, please feel free to contact my District Office at 600 N. Jackson St, Suite 203, Media, PA 19063, 610-892-8623.

Congressman Joe Sestak is now on Twitter. You can receive updates on the Congressman's daily events as well as links to information about legislation, YouTube clips and photographs from around the District. Sign up at <http://www.twitter.com/JoeSestak> .

**For the most complete and up-to-date information on Congressman Sestak's work in Washington and in the 7th Congressional District, please visit <http://sestak.house.gov> . For help with a problem for which the Congressman can offer assistance, please call his District Office at 610-892-8623.*

Please do not respond to this email.

To send an email to Congressman Sestak, please

visit http://www.sestak.house.gov/IMA/issue_subscribe.shtml .

Efforts to Restore our Economic Security

Hosted 7th Congressional District Business Procurement Summit

On Friday, March 27, 2009, over 1,000 attendees packed our second *7th Congressional District Business Procurement Summit*

at the Springfield County Club—fully doubling the 500 attendees we originally anticipated. Nearly 60 government agencies and major contractors presented exhibits for more than 900 representatives of local businesses and organizations, and Dr. Mark Zandi, chief economist and co-founder of Moody's Economy.com, and Lt. Gen. Mark Shackelford, USAF, delivered keynote addresses on the Recovery Act and the defense acquisition process. My objective in convening this event was to execute my pledge to bring Washington decision-makers to the 7th Congressional District and to see that the views of the constituents of the District are fully integrated in my legislative agenda. It is clear that the nation is in an economic crisis and this is a time that demands good government—a government proactive and wholly dedicated to your needs. The unemployment rate in my District is over 6.4%, and the underemployment rate is much higher. Both numbers are very likely to increase in the near term. Right now, I want the businesses and the workforce of the 7th Congressional District to have every conceivable advantage as they fight through this economic crisis. I want them to be expert at understanding the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). If there is an opportunity for a local business to profit from their good work through the ARRA, I want that to happen. This event was designed to prove that government, businesses and labor can come together in close collaboration for the mutual benefit of all and the greater good of our community and country.

Voted in Support of President's Strategic Budget to Spur Economy and Invest in Education, Energy, and Health Care

This week, I voted for a House Resolution to advance President Obama's budget because it institutes the key strategic investments in education, energy, and health care needed to retool our economy to be competitive in the future, while continuing the necessary actions already underway to promote recovery from the present global economic challenge. The budget resolution provides a strong framework for overcoming our immediate financial crisis and laying the groundwork for our future prosperity. This budget builds on the actions taken as part of the Recovery Act to prevent job losses and rebuild the nation's infrastructure and energy independence for the future; begins the strategic investment we must make on health care reform that is necessary to lower costs, improve quality, and expand coverage for the 46 million Americans who now lack health insurance, which costs this country more than \$100 billion annually in lost productivity; provides investment for rebuilding our educational system to provide an educated and skilled workforce able to function effectively in the future; reduces

energy dependence and creates new jobs for the future by increasing investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency by 18% over 2009; and reduces the deficit by 50% over the next five years.

I want to make it clear to my constituents that I view this Nation's economic priorities and strategic investments as a two-stage process. First, we must be aggressive up front in confronting this economic crisis. If we do not act boldly now, we will face much larger—not smaller—deficits in the future. And our stimulus measures must take the form of these strategic investments in education, energy, and health care. These investments now will pay tremendous dividends in the future, in the form of greatly reduced energy and health care costs and a healthy, productive, competitive workforce that will drive our economic prosperity in the future. The second phase is to address the longer term, 'structural deficit' that the President has inherited, in the form of unsustainable spending for mandatory entitlements. As this recession ends, I will continue to work to address the long term structural funding issues that will cause our budget to become unsustainable by 2019 if these problems are not addressed. We will take the necessary steps to revitalize our economy now and then focus our efforts and attention on entitlement reform to reduce the deficit, taking into account Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other programs without losing benefits for those who are recipients of these programs.

Supported Efforts to Unlock Credit for Small Businesses

As Vice-Chair of the House Small Business Committee, I actively supported the Administration's plan to get credit flowing again to entrepreneurs and small business owners. As I have noted repeatedly, economic recovery will be led by our small businesses, which have generated 70 percent of new jobs over the past decade. But to succeed, small businesses need to access to the lines of credit that are the lifeblood of our small business economy. As an indication of the

situation our businesses are facing, the Small Business Administration (SBA), which usually guarantees approximately \$20 billion in loans annually, is expected to guarantee less than \$10 billion this year. I have been working hard to address these conditions. I actively supported H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which included provisions to infuse the nation's small businesses—which comprise 99 percent of American industry and employ half of the private sector workforce with billions in new lending and investment. The bill puts fresh capital in the hands of small business owners, which will result in the creation or retention of 400,000 jobs, more than 15 percent of the jobs the economy shed last year; and also targets billions of dollars in tax relief to small businesses, which will also help spur growth. The Administration's plan builds upon these efforts by implementing critical small business provisions in the economic stimulus. The plan temporarily raises guarantees to up to 90 percent in SBA's 7(a) loan program and eliminates certain SBA loan fees to get credit back into the hands of small businesses and ensure that community banks and credit unions feel confident in extending new loans.

Voted for Bipartisan Compromise to Stem Foreclosures

To avoid an estimated 8.1 million additional homeowners from defaulting on their mortgages over the next four years—with potentially 5 million homes lost through foreclosure or short sales—I voted for H.R. 1106, the Helping Families Save Their Homes Act, which passed by a vote of 234 to 191. This measure is the first step in implementing President Obama's comprehensive Homeowner Affordability and Stability Plan. This bill will begin to provide homeowners the assistance they need and will help restore stability to the housing and mortgage markets. But it's important that the American people understand that this bill does not reward irresponsible behavior or provide people a quick escape through bankruptcy. The measures we're implementing are necessary, not easy.

To get more families into affordable mortgages, the bill protects lenders from lawsuits for reasonable loan modifications and fixes the Federal Housing Administration's HOPE for Homeowners program by reducing current fees that have discouraged lenders from participating voluntarily. It will also incentivize the program to make it attractive and useful for lenders and borrowers.

Continued to Update Guide to Recovery Act Resources

Before the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, I recognized the importance of providing easy access to information about the Act and its implementation. During the debate on the legislation and immediately following its passage, I met with nearly every municipality in the 7th District, conferred with school district superintendents, convened forums with the area Chambers of Commerce, hosted six seminars—including one designed just for emergency first-responders—and held four telephone town halls to respond to questions directly from constituents. During that time, my staff went line by line through the Act to assemble an online directory that matches provisions in the Act—ranging from school funding to energy efficiency initiatives to transportation projects—with the government agencies responsible for their implementation. The directory indicates where the information is available, how the provisions will be executed, and who to contact for assistance. Attendees to the Business Procurement Summit received a copy of the Resource Directory, but everyone can access the most up-to-date version of *The 7th Congressional District ARRA Resource Directory* on my Web site, www.sestak.house.gov

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7th District to Receive More Than \$785,000 in Byrne Grants

I am pleased to announce that stimulus funds are continuing to flow, and the 7th District will receive more than \$785,000, provided by the Recovery Act, through the Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program for local law enforcement assistance. This money will help keep our communities safe and will forestall the cutbacks that are threatening our local law enforcement agencies. Stimulus funds will help our economy now by keeping police on the streets and ensure our future prosperity by providing for the long term safety and security of our neighborhoods and the health of our local law enforcement programs, agencies, and departments.

Other Legislation & Events

Congress Passed the Serve America Act and Congressman Sestak's Silver Scholarship Program

I am proud to announce that Congress has passed the Serve America Act, formerly known as the Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education (GIVE) Act, of which I was an original co-sponsor. The Serve America Act will establish funds to expand and recruit volunteers to service programs such as AmeriCorps, SeniorCorps, and Learn and Serve America. **The Act also includes the provisions of my Silver Scholarship program.**

This program will provide individuals over the age of 55 who commit to volunteering for 350+ hours per year a \$1,000 education award to be used for continuing education, which is transferrable to a child, foster child, or grandchild to support their college education.

The bill also provides funds to support individuals who require financial assistance for transportation to and from a service project. The Serve America Act will increase the number of participants in AmeriCorps from 75,000 to 250,000 and boost education grants for volunteers. It also creates a National Day of Service and Remembrance on September 11 to commemorate the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

This nation is a nation of service, built on the foundation of commitment to the common good and prospering through our dedication to our neighbors, our country, and the world community. I am proud to be a co-sponsor of this legislation that will support those who serve and allow everyone to share their abilities, effort, and devotion, while building on the President's call to begin a renewed spirit of national service for this and future generations.

Introduced Legislation to Improve Autism Care: On March 19, I introduced legislation to improve the level of care provided to military children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Last session, I successfully placed an amendment into the National Defense Authorization Act that enhanced the funding and research for autism for military families, increasing it by 100 percent. This new legislation would ensure treatment that is considered medically necessary for a child with ASD will be covered by TRICARE for military families. Providing improved coverage for autism therapies for military families will have far reaching effects for non-military families who are currently fighting for

autism insurance reform in many states across the country. We cannot allow our children with autism to be shortchanged. With access to the right, medically-necessary, evidence-based therapies like Applied Behavioral Analysis, these children can make incredible gains and reach their full potential.

Designating 2009 the ‘Year of the Military Family’: I proudly voted for a House resolution urging the President to designate 2009 “The Year of the Military Family.” The resolution passed by a vote of 422 to 0. This resolution affirms that Congress expresses its deepest appreciation to the families of members of the Armed Forces who serve, or have served, in defense of the United States; recognizes the contributions that military families make and encourages the people of the United States to share their appreciation for the sacrifices military families give on behalf of the United States; and encourages the people of the United States and the Department of Defense to observe the “Year of Military Family” with appropriate ceremonies and activities. As someone who served this nation for 31 years in the Navy, I know the toll deployments take on the families of our Armed Service members. Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines don’t go to

war—families go to war, and nations go to war. Just as we should never forget the brave men and women serving overseas in harm's way, we should never forget the courageous family members that remain behind—family members that take care of children, that pick up the slack, that worry every night about the safety and well-being of loved ones who stand on the front lines in defense of our nation. It is in their honor that I proudly support designating this year officially—as all years should be in spirit— “The Year of the Military Family.”

Co-sponsored the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2009: This measure, passed by the House, directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase the rates of basic compensation for disabled veterans and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation to their survivors and dependents, along with other benefits, in order to keep pace with the rising cost-of-living. The adjustment would become effective December 1, 2009, and would be equal to that provided on an annual basis to Social Security recipients.

Ensuring Our Veterans and Their Families Get the Care They Have Earned: This month, I co-signed a letter to President Obama announcing my opposition to any plan that would force America's Veterans to use private health insurance to pay for treatment of service-related injuries or disabilities. America's Veterans have earned the full support of their nation. They and their families can be fully assured that I will oppose any plan that would bill wounded Veterans' private insurance for the care they receive. There is a sacred trust between a nation and its warriors, and I will always fight to ensure that this trust is never threatened, weakened, or broken. Thankfully, the Administration has heard the concerns of America's veterans and has decided not to pursue this proposal any further.

Appointed to House Panel on Defense Acquisition Reform: I am proud to have been appointed by Congressman Ike Skelton (Mo.), Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, to a newly formed special panel to address the ongoing challenge of defense acquisition reform. During my time in the Navy and in Congress, I have argued for the need to overhaul our defense appropriations process. In December 2008, I addressed the Center for American Progress on the need for acquisition reform, outlining the work proposals I developed on the Congressional Roles and Missions Panel. I am already working to

institute accountability reform with several amendments within this year's defense authorization bill. The President has spoken strongly about the need to reform our defense acquisition process and I support him fully in this effort. As Director of Navy Warfare Requirements, overseeing the Navy's \$70 billion warfare development budget, I have seen the flaws of this system firsthand. Too often, the Department of Defense, the defense industry, and Congress operate under a 'tyranny of optimism,' taking the most optimistic—not realistic—approach to budgeting and appropriations. This leads to proposals that are routinely understated and projects that habitually overrun their budgets. It's time to impose a strategic pause—or, at least, review—in defense acquisition so that the Department of Defense can overhaul the process to ensure taxpayers receive a fair value for their dollar and warfighters receive capable systems on time and within budgets.

Upcoming Events

I am holding my Third Annual Veterans Summit in May at Ridley High School. Last year's Veterans Summit drew over 300 veterans and their families. The 7th Congressional District has 54,000 Veterans—from the World War II generation of my father to those recently returning from the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq—and my District Office has handled over 1,200 Veterans cases.

The Third Annual Veterans Summit will be held Monday, May 11, 2009, from 6-9pm at Ridley High School, in Folsom. To sign up for the Summit, please visit http://www.sestak.house.gov/upcoming_events.shtml.

Announcements

ATTENTION SUMMER TRAVELERS

This summer the State Department will begin to enforce new passport regulations. As of June 1, 2009, U.S. citizens must present a passport book, passport card, or other travel documents approved by the U.S. government to enter the United States from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda at all land borders and sea ports of entry. For complete details about the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative visit http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html

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All other US passport information, including how to apply and track your application, is available on Department of State's website <http://travel.s>

tate.gov

Although standard passport processing is currently taking about four weeks, the new Travel Initiative, combined with the expected seasonal increases in demand, will undoubtedly cause longer processing times. Therefore, I recommend that you apply for your passport well before planned travel.

If you have additional questions about the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative or passport processing, please contact my district representative, Eve Massa, at eve.massa@mail.house.gov.

Medicare Information

Your local Medicare contractor (carrier, fiscal intermediary, or Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC)) is a valuable source of news and information regarding Medicare business in your specific practice location. Through their electronic mailing lists, your local contractor can quickly provide you with information pertinent to your geographic area, such as local coverage determinations, local provider education activities, etc. If you have not done so already, you should go to your local contractor website and sign up for their listserv or e-mailing list. Many contractors have links on their home page to take you to their registration page to subscribe to their listserv. If you do not see a link on the homepage, just search their site for “listserv” or “e-mail list” to find the registration page. If you do not know the Web address of your contractor’s homepage, it is available at: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/CallCenterTollNumDirectory.zip>